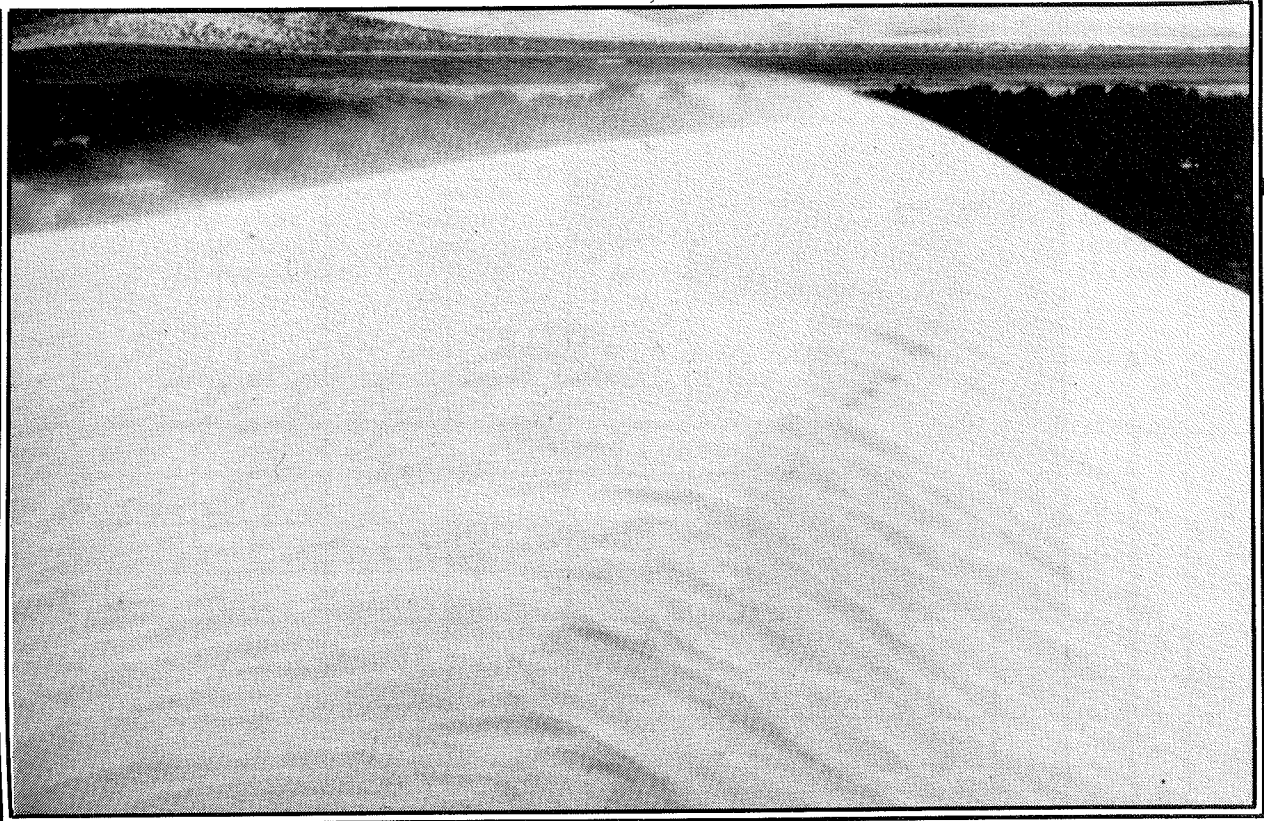


Rockwell
WSA



ROCKWELL WSA

R. 6 W.

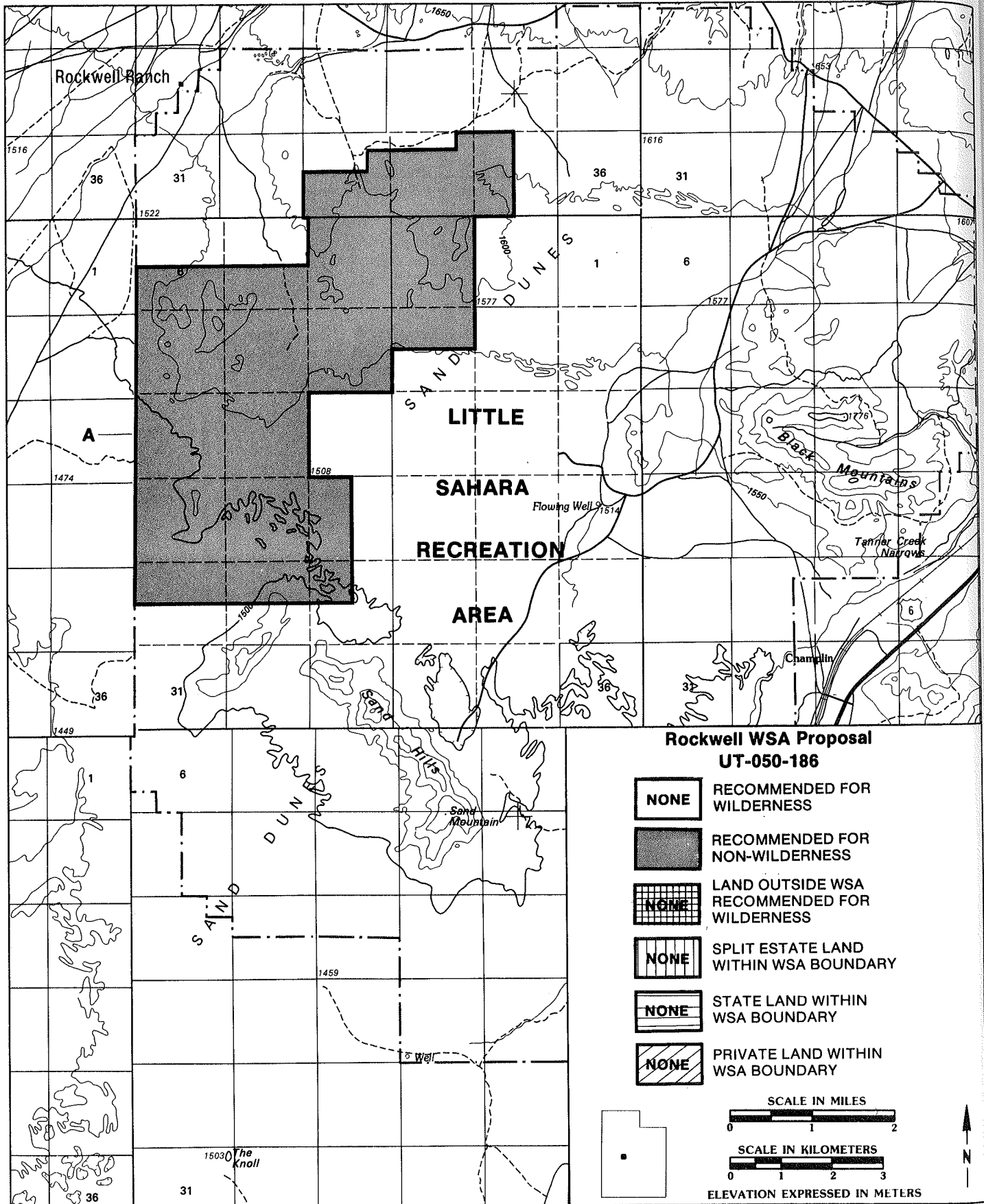
R. 5 W.

R. 4 W.

T. 12 S.

T. 13 S.

T. 14 S.



ROCKWELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA 9,150 acres

The Rockwell Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-050-186) is in central Juab County, 28 miles west of Nephi, Utah (population 3,285). The WSA consists entirely of public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The study area is within BLM's Little Sahara Recreation Area, and the west boundary of the WSA forms part of the west boundary of the recreation area (see Map). There are no private or State in-holdings or split-estate tracts (see Table 1). The boundary of the WSA is on section and subsection lines that enclose Federal lands and includes features that meet Wilderness Act definitions while excluding three sections of State lands.

The WSA is in an alluvium and sand dune covered valley. The terrain consists of free-moving sand dunes, dunes stabilized by trees or brush, and sagebrush flats. Elevations average about 5,000 feet. No perennial waters are in the WSA. Vegetation is relatively sparse, consisting of scattered junipers, saltbush, greasewood, and sagebrush. Old juniper trees and changing shadow patterns on the dunes provide a variety of visual settings. Principal uses are recreation and habitat for wildlife.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in

**TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA**

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	9,150
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
Total	9,150
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	0
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	9,150
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	9,150
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

ROCKWELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

November 1990. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness (no action) alternative which is the recommendation in this report and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

- 0 acres
(recommended for wilderness)
- 9,150 acres
(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to release all of the area for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

If the area is released from wilderness it will automatically fall under the existing designation "Outstanding Natural Area/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ONA/ACEC)." This designation provides management direction to maintain natural conditions.

The entire WSA is natural, but almost half the area lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation (45 and 46 percent, respectively). About 38 percent of the WSA has outstanding scenic quality because of the changing colors and forms of the sand dunes, but 62 percent of the area consists of grass, sagebrush, and juniper-covered hills and flats of average or poor scenic quality.

Intense off-highway vehicular (OHV) recreational activity in the adjacent Little Sahara Recreation Area reduces opportunities for solitude in the WSA. To avoid effects of this activity in the WSA would be difficult without imposing constraints on vehicular recreation in the Little Sahara Recreation Area and negating the primary use of that area.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. The free flowing dunes quickly erase evidence of activity. Essentially all of the 9,150 acres are considered natural. The only intrusion is a vehicular way in the north-central part of the WSA which penetrates for about 1 mile, and is substantially unnoticeable. In August 1986, a wildfire burned 2,500 acres in the southwestern portion of the WSA. The burned area was not rehabilitated, but it now appears natural.

B. Solitude

The Rockwell WSA is relatively small (2 to 4 miles wide by 5 miles long), but the sand hills in the interior provide sufficient screening and are far enough from motorized activity to furnish outstanding opportunities for solitude on 5,044 acres, or 55 percent of the WSA.

The lack of topographic and vegetative screening and adjacent motorized recreation activities make opportunities for solitude less than outstanding on 4,106 acres (45 percent of the WSA). Several motorcycle races are held throughout the year adjacent to and on all sides of the WSA. Considerable additional OHV use occurs 1 to 2 miles south of the WSA. Although the WSA was administratively closed to OHV use in 1974, BLM has found it difficult to prevent OHV intrusion in the WSA due to the intensity of activity in the surrounding portions of the Little Sahara Recreation Area. The eastern and southern boundaries of the unit are difficult to define, post, and patrol.

ROCKWELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Overall quality of opportunities for primitive unconfined recreation meets the Wilderness Act standards on approximately 4,945 acres (54 percent of the WSA). BLM estimates annual nonvehicular recreation within the WSA at 3,960 user days. Opportunities for nature study and photography are outstanding but opportunities for all other forms of unconfined and primitive recreation are less than outstanding. The outside sights and sounds of OHV activity reduce the quality of primitive recreation opportunities.

Opportunities for primitive recreation on approximately 4,205 acres (46 percent of the WSA) do not meet the standards sufficiently to be rated as outstanding.

D. Special Features

Special features in the WSA include old gnarled junipers, drifting sand dunes, and a unique plant (Atriplex canescens var. gigantea). Old gnarled junipers are scattered throughout the 5,200 acres of juniper woodlands within the WSA. Free-moving sand dunes cover approximately 2,654 acres.

Atriplex canescens var. gigantea, a four-wing saltbush that grows to 10 feet tall is found in the WSA and appears to be the last relic community of a plant species that was once widespread. The species is of great interest to botanists and the BLM. Its only known occurrence is on free-moving sand dunes in the Little Sahara Recreation Area and the WSA. Protection of the species is a major reason for currently managing the WSA as an ACEC-Natural Area.

Bald eagles, an endangered species, are found in the WSA. Candidate threatened or endangered species that may inhabit the WSA include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, and white-faced ibis. These species also frequent other areas in the Great Basin.

Thirty-eight percent of the WSA is classified as having outstanding scenic quality due to the form and color of the sand dunes.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would add a potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystem (Great Basin sagebrush) presently represented in the NWPS in only one wilderness and not represented at all in the NWPS in Utah. PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV types in the WSA are Great Basin sagebrush (6,405 acres) and saltbush-greasewood (2,745 acres). Saltbush-greasewood is not represented in Utah in the NWPS but is represented nationally and in other BLM study areas in and outside of Utah. The combination of the two ecosystems is currently represented in the NWPS, but is represented in other BLM study areas in and outside of Utah.

This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in February 1989 and from BLM files.

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah major population centers. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated wilderness and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Rockwell WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the NWPS. Six designated wilderness areas administered by the U.S. Forest Service (FS) are within 100 miles of the WSA. In a clockwise direction, beginning to the north,

ROCKWELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

**TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION**

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Great Basin Sagebrush	1	32,407	56	1,212,870
Saltbush-Greasewood	3	43,553	37	1,057,981
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Great Basin Sagebrush	0	0	1	14,000
Saltbush-Greasewood	0	0	7	144,100

Source: BLM File Data.

**TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS**

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,250,525
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	90	2,777,718

Source: BLM File Data.

are the 25,500-acre Deseret Peak Wilderness, the 16,000-acre Mt. Olympus Wilderness, the 11,334-acre Twin Peaks Wilderness, the 8,922-acre Lone Peak Wilderness, the 10,750-acre Mt. Timpanogos Wilderness, and, to the east, the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo Wilderness. All are in National Forests. No wilderness areas have been designated in the Great Basin in Utah and Nevada within 100 miles south or west of the WSA, but the WSA does not include wilderness values that would contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas in the Great Basin.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being managed effectively to preserve its wilderness character.)

The WSA can be managed as wilderness, but to do so would require partial or complete restraints on OHV recreational activity in adjacent parts of the Little

Sahara Recreation Area. Current and planned management practices would protect or enhance existing wilderness values, while allowing nondetrimental uses of the area. The WSA is managed as an ACEC under Section 202 of the FLPMA. Under ACEC designation, the WSA is withdrawn from mineral location and closed to mineral leasing and sale; closed to OHV use, woodland product harvest, and hunting; and zoned to protect visual resources. There are 24 mining claims in the area that, if valid, could be developed following wilderness designation. However, the probability of development is low in the foreseeable future. Domestic livestock grazing use can continue as already authorized in applicable BLM planning documents. Development, use, and maintenance of improvements for livestock grazing, wildlife, and water resources could be allowed if in conformance with BLM plans, although none are currently proposed. Wilderness designation would not provide any addition-

ROCKWELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

al directives that are necessary to preserve the sensitive resources in the WSA.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Because the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) did not prepare a mineral assessment report for the area. According to BLM geologists, the potential for recoverable mineral resources in the WSA is generally low. The few oil and gas deposits that have been found in the Great Basin are small and scattered, and there is no assurance that favorable conditions exist within the WSA. Metallic minerals have been mined or found in the mountains around the WSA. The few rock outcrops in the study area do not give any indication of such minerals, however, and any mineral resources that may exist in the WSA would be at depths of 1,000 feet or more making recovery uneconomical.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on wilderness values which is considered to be the only resource that would be significantly affected by designation or non-designation of the WSA as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be a significant issue in the EIS.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 38 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 34 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same

commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 14 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 16 commenters were opposed. Four commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on special features in the WSA and opportunities for solitude. The majority of these commenters were equally from Utah and other states. Of particular concern to them was the need to add diversity to the NWPS by incorporating areas such as the Rockwell WSA; protect wildlife, wildlife habitat, and threatened species; and to protect the area from OHV use.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness designation would preclude mineral exploration and development; interfere with water rights and development; harm state and local economy; and would be unnecessary to manage the area. The majority of those who opposed wilderness for the WSA were local citizens.

One Federal agency, the USBM, commented on the Draft EIS for this WSA. The USBM did not take a position regarding designation or nondesignation but commented that BLM had understated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State in-holdings in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State noted that the Rockwell WSA has problems with wilderness management because of loss of solitude resulting from OHV use in the adjacent Little Sahara Recreation Area. The State does support designation of the Rockwell Natural Area as an ACEC. Specific State comments on the Draft EIS dealt with inadequacies of

ROCKWELL WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

the geology discussion and wording of the endangered plant section.

The Juab County Commission is opposed to designation of the WSA as wilderness. The County generally prefers that open spaces be used for many purposes on public lands. The Juab County Commission has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness which opposes wilderness designation for BLM lands in Utah.

ROCKWELL WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (9,150 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	<p>Because BLM would manage the area as an ONA/ACEC, wilderness values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and special features would remain as at present. Outside sights and sounds from ORV activity would continue to detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in about 45 percent (4,106 acres) of the WSA.</p>	<p>Wilderness values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and special features would be preserved. In spite of wilderness designation, outside sights and sounds from ORV activity would continue to detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in about 45 percent (4,106 acres) of the WSA.</p>